

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USDEL SECRETARY IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 219731 TOSEC 260059

EXDIS

FOLLOWING TEL AVIV 6095 SENT ACTION SECSTATE INFO CAIRO
SEP 03:

QUOTE S E C R E T TEL AVIV 6095

EXDIS

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM THE AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IS, US, EG, XF

SUBJECC ISRAELI HARASSMENT OF AMOCO IN GULF OF SUEZ

REF: STATE 218121

1. I MET WITH ALLON 1715 ON SEPTEMBER 3 TO CONVEY TO HIM THE POINTS
IN REFTEL. I TOLD HIM I HAD TRIED TO MEET WITH RABIN BUT HAD BEEN TOLD

THE FIRST TIME AVAILABLE WAS SUNDAY AFTERNOON AND I FELT THE MATTER
WAS TOO URGENT TO WAIT UNTIL THEN. I THEN MADE THE POINTS PRECISELY
AS SET FORTH REFTEL.

2. ALLON SAID HE WAS GLAD WE WERE NOT APPROACHING THE SUBJECT AS A
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LEGAL OR LEGALISTIC PROBLEM, SINCE HIS CAREFUL STUDY OF BOTH LEGAL

ARGUMENTS DID NOT REVEAL A SOLUTION.

3. THE ARGUMENT IS NOT BETWEEN THE GOI AND THE U.S. GOVERNMENT, IT IS

BETWEEN ISRAEL AND EGYPT. THE U.S. IS NOT A PARTY TO THE DISPUTE BUT A RESPECTED MEDIATOR. THE U.S. HAD MADE A CLEAR COMMITMENT IN SINAI II

NOT TO SUPPORT ANY POLITICAL PROPOSAL DISADVANTAGEOUS TO ISRAEL, BUT ALLON FELT WITH REGRET THAT U.S. BY ITS POSITION ON THE SUEZ FLAP IS NOW TAKING SIDES.

4. EGYPT IS USING U.S. OIL COMPANIES TO ESTABLISH A POLITICAL CASE AGAINST ISRAELI INTERESTS IN THE GULF OF SUEZ. EGYPT GAVE U.S. (AND SOME NON-U.S.) COMPANIES CONCESSIONS IN THE GULF AND IN SINAI IN ORDER

TO MOBILIZE ECONOMIC PRESSURE ON ISRAEL. HE SAW NO REASON WHY A FRIENDLY GOVERNMENT LIKE THE U.S. SHOULD SUPPORT THIS PLOY.

5. THIS IS A MAJOR ISSUE AND INVOLVES MORE THAN THE TREATMENT OF A U.S. FLAG VESSEL. THIS IS TAKING PLACE AT A TIME WHEN EGYPT IS LEADING

THE ANTI-ISRAEL POLITICAL CAMPAIGN. THAT CAMPAIGN HAS INTENSIFIED RECENTLY AND CULMINATED IN SADAT'S SPEECH AT COLOMBO WHERE HE SPOKE OF THE NECESSITY OF "NEW LESSONS" FOR ISRAEL. THIS CAMPAIGN IS ALSO BECOMING APPARENT IN EGYPT'S CONDUCT AT THE LOS CONFERENCE. IF IT WERE TO BECOME PUBLIC THAT THE U.S. IS SUPPORTING THIS EFFORT ESPECIALLY AT THIS TIME IT WOULD CAUSE GREAT DIFFICULTIES BOTH IN ISRAEL AND IN THE U.S.

6. ISRAEL WILL NOT HARASS THE VESSEL BUT IT WILL NOT MAKE THINGS EASY

FOR IT. "WE WILL NOT HARASS. WE WILL NOT FIRE. BUT THEY WILL SEE US

AROUND." MISINFORMING THE U.S. GOVERNMENT AS AMOCO HAS DONE IS IRRESPONSIBLE. DESPITE HIS DISTASTE FOR OUR WAY OF HANDLING THE ISSUE,

ALLON SAID, HE IS WILLING TO TALK. MEANWHILE, HE WILL INFORM RABIN OF OUR DEMARCHE BUT NOT THE ENTIRE CABINET; THIS WOULD BE DISASTROUS.

7. I ASKED ALLON WHAT HE MEANT BY SAYING ISRAEL WOULD NOT HARASS BUT
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WOULD TRY TO PREVENT THE SHIP'S OPERATIONS. HE REPEATED THAT THE SHIP

WOULD NOT BE SUBJECTED TO PHYSICAL HARASSMENT BUT "IT WOULD NOT FIND IT CONVENIENT TO DRILL." HE SUGGESTED AGAIN THAT THE DISPUTE SHOULD BE LEFT TO ISRAEL AND EGYPT. I SAID ALLON MUST RECOGNIZE THE U.S. GOVERNMENT HAD A LEGITIMATE ROLE TO PLAY. A U.S. COMPANY HAS A VALID CONCESSION TO EXPLORE IN THE GULF OF SUEZ AND IT HAS THE LEGAL RIGHT TO EXPLORE BEYOND WHAT ISRAEL CALLS THE MEDIAN LINE. THE U.S. GOVERNMENT

HAS AN OBLIGATION TO PROTECT THE VALID OPERATIONS OF THAT COMPANY.

8. THE FOREIGN MINISTER THEN SAID THAT IF THE U.S. COMPANY WANTS TO DRILL EAST OF THE MEDIAN LINE, IT SHOULD APPROACH THE GOI. THE DISPUTE

IS BETWEEN THE ISRAELI AND THE EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENTS BECAUSE THE EGYPT-
IANS

AWARDED THE CONCESSION IN AN AREA WHERE THE ISRAELIS ARE IN CONTROL. HE SAID THAT SADAT IS AS CLEVER AS A FOX TO HAVE BEEN ABLE TO INDUCE THE U.S. TO TABLE THIS KIND OF DEMARCHE, TO HAVE DRIVEN THIS SORT OF WEDGE BETWEEN US BECAUSE OF A CONCESSION WHICH HE HAS GIVEN. HE THEN MADE A POINT WHICH HE REPEATED SEVERAL TIMES -- WHAT IS THE URGENCY? THE COMPANY HAS HAD THIS CONCESSION FOR YEARS, WHY MUST WE BE GIVEN DEAD-
LINES OF A FEW HOURS NOW? FOR 9-1/2 YEARS THERE WAS NO DISCUSSION OF THIS SUBJECT AND NOW IT IS A MAJOR ISSUE BECAUSE SADAT MANAGED TO GET A U.S. OIL COMPANY TO ACT FOR HIM. ALLON ASKED IF OIL COMPANIES REALLY

HAVE THIS SORT OF INFLUENCE IN WASHINGTON. DO THEY REALLY DETERMINE U.S. POLICY?

9. I TOLD HIM HE MUST REALIZE THESE SORT OF QUESTIONS DO NOT DESERVE REPLIES. I ASKED HIM WHAT HE WISHED ME TO REPORT TO WASHINGTON. HE REPEATED SEVERAL OF HIS PREVIOUS POINTS: THE DISPUTE IS BETWEEN EGYPT AND ISRAEL, NOT ISRAEL AND THE UNITED STATES. EGYPT GAVE THE CONCESSION

UNILATERALLY. IT IS NOW TRYING TO MOBILIZE ECONOMIC PRESSURE ON THE U.S. GOVERNMENT. ISRAEL WILL NOT PHYSICALLY HARASS THE SHIP BUT WILL SEEK WAYS NOT TO MAKE ITS OPERATIONS EASY. HE WOULD RECOMMEND WE DIS-

CUSS THE PROBLEM; HE WAS READY TO TALK ANY TIME BUT HE FAILED TO SEE
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WHY WE REGARDED THE PROBLEM AS ONE OF GREAT URGENCY.

10. I THEN SAID THAT WE FELT THE PROBLEM WAS ONE OF GREAT URGENCY BECAUSE ACCORDING TO INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO US THE DRILL SHIP WOULD RETURN TO THE AREA TOMORROW. HE SAID THERE "WOULD BE NO WAR, BUT IT WON'T BE PLEASANT EITHER." IF THERE IS PUBLICITY, THERE WILL BE AN OUTCRY.

I ASKED HIM AGAIN WHAT PRECISELY HE MEANT WHEN HE SAID ISRAELI FORCES

WOULD NOT PHYSICALLY HARASS THE SHIP BUT WOULD PREVENT ITS OPERATIONS.

WILL IT BE INTERFERED WITH? HE SAID ISRAEL WILL TRY TO MAKE ITS OPERATIONS DIFFICULT AND THAT THE ISRAELIS WILL BE THERE AND WILL BE PATROLLING. HE SAID HE WOULD BE GRATEFUL IF WE COULD PERSUADE THE COM-

PANY TO POSTPONE ITS OPERATIONS UNTIL WE HAVE A CHANCE TO DISCUSS THE

MATTER. HE WOULD BE COMING SOON TO THE U.S. AND HIS VISIT COULD
PROVIDE A GOOD OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS THE PROBLEM IN DEPTH.

11. I SAID THE PROBLEM WAS TOO URGENT TO WARRANT THIS SORT OF TREAT-
MENT. AS TO HIS SUGGESTION WE TELL AMOCO TO DESIST, HE SHOULD KNOW
IT WOULD BE INCONSISTENT WITH OUR
LEGAL POSITION TO TELL AMOCO IT SHOULD NOT PROCEED WITH OPERATIONS
WE RAGARDED AS LEGITIMATE.

12. I WOULD REPORT HIS VIEWS TO WASHINGTON, BUT I HOPED ISRAEL
WOULD ACT TO AVOID A CONFRONTATION. ALLON REITERATED HIS SUGGESTION
OUR EXPERTS DISCUSS THE PROBLEM. MEANWHILE, HE WOULD ADVISE THE
COMPANY NOT TO DRILL.

13. COMMENT: THE ISRAELIS ARE CLEARLY UPTIGHT ON THIS ISSUE. I SEE
VIRTUALLY NO GIVE IN THEIR POSITION. THEY OBVIOUSLY FEEL STRONGLY
THAT THEIR RETREAT NOW WOULD BE SEEN IN CAIRO AS AN INDICATION OF
WEAKNESS AND WOULD LEAD TO FURTHER CHALLENGES AND PROBLEMS. MOREOVER,

AS ALLON INDICATED, THEY BELIEVE THAT IF CASE IS PUBLICIZED THEY, AND

NOT WE, WILL BE IN STRONGER POSITION CERTAINLY HERE AND POSSIBLY IN
U.S. AS WELL. TOON UNQUOTE ROBINSON

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